

## Cell Tower Planned for Old Brookville Police Headquarters Draws Ire

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*The Old Brookville Police Department serves Brookville, Old Brookville, Upper Brookville, Mill Neck, Cove Neck, and Matinecock.*

Five Gold Coast villages are sounding the alarm that a proposal to build a cell phone tower at Old Brookville Police Department headquarters could handcuff cops' ability to quickly respond to emergencies.

The Village of Upper Brookville, which owns the land where the OBPD station house is located, swatted away the critics when the board of trustees unanimously passed a resolution paving the way for the construction. Now the other five surrounding villages in a six-way OBPD protection partnership say Upper Brookville has run afoul of their agreement by putting their neighbors' lives at risk — an allegation cell tower proponents deny.

"It is a detriment to — besides your residents — to your five other partners," Old Brookville Village Trustee Matt Schamroth, a member of OBPD's board of commissioners that oversees the department's operations, told the Upper Brookville village board before the vote at its Oct. 6 meeting. "It would be criminal if the lack of response time because something has now been slowed down results in something that you can't undo."

OBPD also serves the villages of Brookville, Mill Neck, Cove Neck, and Matinecock, the mayors of which joined Old Brookville in charging that Upper Brookville should find another place for the tower that won't potentially slow police response times.

"We do not believe you can reasonably take the position that the construction of the cell tower will not interfere with police department operations if ... contractors and vendors need access to the parking lot in order to construct and/or maintain the cell tower," Mill Neck Mayor Peter Quick wrote to Upper Brookville in a letter obtained by the Press.

None of the critics disagree that cell service in the communities dotting northwestern Nassau County need improvement. But the five village leaders opposing Upper Brookville are worried that work crews taking over the OBPD parking lot will impede police officers from responding as quickly as possible to 911 calls.

“My job, which is an efficient and effective operation of this police department for everybody ... should not be interfered with,” said OBPD Chief Christopher Walsh.

Critics add that after construction is done, maintenance crews — one for each of the handful of service providers that often share cell towers — will need to visit the tower at least monthly, if not more, potentially blocking traffic in the small OBPD parking lot for years to come.

Upper Brookville Mayor Elliot Conway, whose village stands to earn \$30,000 annually from each cell phone company that shares the tower, shot back that the need to improve cell service outweighs other concerns.

“While the installation of a mobile antennae may have some negative impacts in regard to aesthetics, this impact is more than offset by the improved level of service for the public, including health and safety benefits, and the additional revenue to the village,” Conway said while reading a study the village had commissioned to examine the issue. “The amount of traffic to and from the site will be minimal with only a visit or two a month at most.”

Conway cited Federal Communications Commission statistics showing 60 percent of homes have no landline telephones and an estimated 80 percent of 911 calls are made from cell phones.

“The police can’t come if they never get the call,” added Upper Brookville Trustee Carl A. Friedrich. “There’s no delay greater than when police are not able to get the call on the first, second, or third attempt due to inferior cell service in the area.”

Matinecock Village Deputy Mayor Albert Kalimian countered that the OBPD serves more people than the proposed cell tower.

“The tower that you’re proposing putting on the police headquarters only satisfies 200 or 250 [*see note below*] of your residents, whereas the tower impacting the police impacts 10,000 residents,” he said. “There is a magnitude here of importance... and police coverage trumps cell coverage for 250 residents.”

Like Schamroth of Old Brookville, Kalimian also serves on the OBPD board of commissioners along with Conway of Upper Brookville and officials from the other three villages.

Asked to comment on concerns that the tower might delay OBPD police response times, AT&T, which is in talks with Upper Brookville to build the 140-foot tower, dodged the question.

A company spokeswoman said, “We continually work to improve our network and we will coordinate with the Village of Upper Brookville as we build the critical infrastructure that will enhance coverage for Long Island residents, guests, and first responders.”

*Note: The tower being proposed is anticipated to cover 41% of the Village-- approximately 200 homes with an estimated 700 residents.*